VOLUME IX NUMBER 3

The Mennonite Quarterly Review

JULY 1935

EDITORIAL

EVER SINCE JESUS INFORMED HIS DISCIPLES THAT THEY MUST LIVE in a world containing both good and evil and yet follow the course which is good many Christian people have responded to the challenge in a heroic and determined manner. And none have been more uncompromising in their adherence to the course they believed to be right than the Anabaptists and Mennonites. The preceding issue of the REVIEW contained the first of a series of articles by David G. Rempel dealing with the Mennonite migration to New Russia. This article presented an analysis of the colonization policy of Catherine II and Alexander I. In the present issue Dr. Rempel describes the actual migration from Prussia to New Russia, showing with scholarly care the economic and political difficulties encountered. While these articles are part of a larger study stressing the economic development of the colonies in Russia, the reader cannot fail to be impressed with the religious idealism motivating the removal of these people to their new home. In spite of numerous hardships about 1922 families successfully negotiated the trek between 1787 and 1870, establishing their homes on Russian soil where they developed a noteworthy economic life and a culture of unique and distinctive characteristics.

THE FANATICAL EXCESSES OF THE MÜNSTERITE KINGDOM HAVE been responsible for much confusion in the historiography dealing with the Anabaptists. As pointed out in the editorial section of the preceding issue of the REVIEW, Carl Adolf Cornelius in the nineteenth century laid the foundation for an objective study of Anabaptism in general. Due to the work of Cornelius and others who have followed him, this confusion of the small fanatical group with the larger peaceful, and evangelical, Anabaptist movement has gradual-

ly been cleared. In this issue John Horsch concludes his article of two instalments on "The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists of Münster." This article is significant as the first authoritative treatment of the Münsterite kingdom from the Mennonite viewpoint. It is written in the light of the latest research and contains freshness in point of view as well as new material. In a future issue the REVIEW will present another article by John Horsch on the relationship of the Mennonites to the Münsterites. The last article will give the Bibliography.

THE STORY OF THE MIGRATION OF MENNONITES FROM RUSSIA to America in the late nineteenth century has been told by a number of writers. New material bearing on the subject, however, appears from time to time. In the article by Professor Ernst Correll the REVIEW publishes for the first time some valuable source material obtained in the archives of the Department of State at Washington. This contains the record of the negotiations between President Grant and the Mennonite representatives on the question of exemption from military service. H.

THE MENNONITE MIGRATION TO NEW RUSSIA (1787-1870)

II. The Emigration to Russia

David G. Rempel

Founding of the Khortitsa Settlement

In accordance with Trappe's wish the Chancellor charged Sokolovsky with the task of completing the arrangements for the emigration and for transporting the emigrants to Riga. The problem of securing passports caused the consul no end of trouble. The resistance of the Danzig authorities in this matter was in no small degree due to pressure from von Lindenowsky, the Prussian consul in Danzig, since a reduction of population in an area about to be annexed was, of course, not to the interest of Prussia.[1] The inability to obtain passports threatened serious losses particularly to those who had already liquidated their property and also paid the tenth to the city treasury. To offset the Prussian pressure the Russian and Polish governments—the latter undoubtedly prompted by the former—threatened with reprisals if passports were not forthcoming.[2] In the end the magistrate yielded, but granted permission to leave only to the poorer class of farmers, the artisans and tradesmen.[3] Those with property had to leave secretly, and only a few of them succeeded in doing so. In Prussian territory, too, it was very difficult to obtain passports.[4] The number of emigrants therefore fell far short of the expectations of the Russian government. Altogether only 1,333 persons were sent to Riga by Sokolovsky between March and November, 1788. Of this number

---

1 Karge, Paul, "Die Auswanderung west—und ostpreussischer Mennoniten nach Südrussland 1787—1820." *Elbinger Jahrbuch* No. 3 (1923), p. 86.

2 The whole affair strikingly illustrates the difficult position of Danzig between the two contending powers.

3 Out of 1011 Mennonite applications in the city proper only 138 were granted. *Ibid.*, p. 86.—The poverty of these first Mennonite colonists in material things and the fact that so large a number of them were not farmers by profession accounted in part for the dire straits in which the settlement found itself for the first ten to fifteen years of its existence. On the other hand the tradesmen and artisans among them laid the foundation for the settlement's subsequent great industrial development.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

ninety families were Lutherans[5] and the rest Mennonites.[6] Two small groups of Mennonites, one consisting of six families and one single person and the other of four families, had left before March.[7] Those of the emigrants who possessed horses and a wagon took the overland route to Riga while the others were sent by water. After a few weeks' rest in Riga each group was directed to Dubrovna, province of Mogilev, where all the colonists were to spend the winter. Eventually 228 Mennonite families assembled in this little town.[8]

Hoeppner and six other men left Dubrovna in early March, 1789, for Berislav to receive the lumber which the government had promised to supply. Upon reaching Chernigov, Potemkin, whose headquarters were located in that city, informed Hoeppner and his companions that in view of the proximity of Berislav to the theater of hostilities the Mennonites were not to settle at the place selected by him and Bartsch in 1787, but on the Khortitsa stream and the historic island of the same name.[9] Hoeppner was to proceed immediately to that place, inspect it and then report to Potemkin personally. There was nothing to do but to comply with the orders of the Governor-general. And so the small band directed its course to Khortitsa instead of to Berislav.

---

[5] Pisarevsky, *Inostrannaia Kolonizatsia,* p. 335. These colonists founded the colony Josephstal, province of Ekaterinoslav.

[6] The majority of these must have come from Danzig and its territory as is evidenced by the fact that nearly all belonged to the Flemish church. Their dialect and the names of the colonies which they established in New Russia point to the same fact. Precise figures are, however, not available either in the archives of the Danzig churches or those in West Prussia. Cf. H. Mannhardt, *Danziger Mennoniten,* p. 129 and Quiring, *Die Mundart von Chortitza in Süd-Russland,* p. 14. Both state that the archives of the Danzig congregations mention 152 families, totalling about 900 persons, having left for New Russia during 1788. Both also point out that the records are incomplete.

A member of the Danzig Senate, in a semi-official letter of protest to Sokolovsky, states that upward of 200 Mennonite families from the Free City's territory had left for Russia during 1788. Pisarevsky, *Inostrannaia Kolonizatsia,* p. 334, n.

[7] Mannhardt, *op. cit.,* p. 129. Quiring, *op. cit.,* p. 9.

[8] Quiring, *op. cit.,* p. 10 says 288 families, without giving the source. Adolf Ehrt, *Das Mennonitentum in Russland von seiner Einwanderung bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin-Leipzig, 1932), p. 22 gives the same figure, citing as his source the *Zhurnal Ministerstva Vnutrennikh Del* for April, 1850. That must be an error, for practically all contemporaneous accounts give the figure 228. Cf. particularly Hildebrandt, *Erste Auswanderung,* p. 48 and the report of the State Counsellor, Contenius, who inspected the Mennonite colonies in 1799, in *P. S. Z.,* XXVI, No. 19,372. The same figure is given in a report of the Minister of the Interior of September 9, 1805 in *P. S. Z.,* XXVIII, No. 21,909 and in a description of the Mennonite colonies in the *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnago Prosveshchenia,* VI (1842), 42-47.

[9] The Khortitsa island, located in the Dnieper, had until 1775 been one of the headquarters of the Zaporozhian Cossacks.

With the full advent of spring the entire group of colonists left Dubrovna. Those who did not possess their own means of transportation the government sent in barges down the Dnieper as far as the frontier town of Ekaterinoslav. The others took the overland route through Niezhin, Orsha, Mogilev to Kremenchug. At the last named place they were told of Potemkin's change of mind and of the sending of Hoeppner to Khortitsa. They therefore decided to stay where they were and await his return. Those on barges, however, had been sent on already. While waiting at Kremenchug the colonists were joined by a certain Major von Essen, whom Potemkin had appointed as the director of their colonies in place of Trappe. Poor as his charges were, the impoverished major tried at once by various threats to extort money from them.[10]

Finally Hoeppner and his companions returned from their trip of investigation, visibly disappointed. The soil at Khortitsa was greatly inferior to that of the tract which had been selected near Berislav, which was similar to the lowlands of the Vistula and where there was a wide open plain with rich meadows and ponds and a great number of trees in the *plavni*[11] of the Dnieper and on the islands of Tavan and Kairo. The Khortitsa district on the other hand, except the mouths of the Khortitsa and Kantsirskaia valleys and the southern extremity of the Khortitsa island, which were wooded, was a barren country with innumerable *balkas*.[12]

Potemkin brusquely brushed aside Hoeppner's objections to the new place of settlement and ordered the colonists at once to proceed to Khortitsa. In obedience to this command the train of covered wagons resumed its slow march southward. The favorable impression which the picturesque and gay Ukrainian villages with their whitewashed mud huts, set in the midst of fine orchards, had made upon the emigrants was gradually erased the farther south they went. For the last several hundred versts they traversed a rolling, barren country with only the burial mounds of ancient inhabitants to relieve now and then the monotony of the limitless, treeless steppes, brown and desolate under the midsummer sun. For days the sole signs of human habitation were a few miserable huts at the bottom of a ravine. Small wonder that lonesomeness and disappointment gradually took hold of them. Finally toward the end of July, 1789, they reached their destination—the long

10 Hildebrandt, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

11 The valleys of these rivers are broad and in many places swampy, covered by so-called plavni, i. e., wooded banks which during the spring floods are under water.

12 The surface of the steppe in New Russia is very flat, here and there furrowed by deep picturesque river valleys and divided into innumerable low plateaus by rain water-rifts, called *balkas*.

narrow valley, a verst and a half wide, through which the Khortitsa meanders toward the Dnieper. At the bottom of the valley they beheld the sad picture of the ruins of a small village[13] and on the crest of the southern slope a large wooden "palace" in the process of being torn down.[14] To the right of the "palace" were the green trees of a young orchard.[15]

The colonists who had boarded the barges at Dubrovna and floated down the Dnieper had arrived at *Tsarskaia pristanj*[16] about a verst above the mouth of the Khortitsa valley, a few days before those who had come by land. After several days of exploration they put up their tents three versts up the Khortitsa stream under a magnificent oak tree, a tree which is still standing and which is supposed to be one of the largest in South Russia. They were just as much disappointed with the topography and the soil as were those who arrived later by land. Where were the fertile plain and

---

13 The Khortitsa valley and the large island of the same name belonged at this time to Potemkin. In 1781 a small village, called Novo-Grigorievka, was founded in this valley. According to one account its inhabitants had been transferred just before the arrival of the Mennonites to the thirty-five versts distant state village, Tomakovka. According to another account they had been transferred to the village Liubimovka in the valley of Lower Khortitsa, then belonging to Countess Skavronskaia. Cf. J. P. Novitsky, *S beregov Dniepra, Ocherki Zaporozhia* (Ekaterinoslav, 1905) p. 199, n.

It is not improbable that Potemkin really owned all the land (over 20,000 desiatins) on which the first Mennonite colonies were founded and that the prince prevented their settlement at Berislav, not out of concern for their safety—the two regions are not far apart—but for the more selfish consideration that a large settlement of excellent farmers would materially enhance the value of the rest of his holdings in the neighborhood.

Another possibility is that the land near Berislav may have been given to some court favorite after the delegates had returned to Danzig. That is what nearly happened with the second Mennonite settlement founded after 1804 on the Molochnaia stream. In this case it was the prompt action of the New Russian Guardians' Bureau which prevented it.

Pisarevsky, *Inostrannaia Kolonizatsia*, p. 335, in speaking of the founding of the colonies at Khortitsa instead of at Berislav, contents himself with the statement: "It is not known what considerations caused the government not to settle the Mennonites on the land which they had selected for themselves on the Konskaia waters, but to set aside for their establishment the Khortitsa district on the right bank of the Dnieper together with the island of the same name."

14 This "palace" had been erected by Potemkin in 1787 for the Empress when she made her famous trip to New Russia. In the light of what is known about Potemkin's preparations for this journey, it may well be possible that Novo-Grigorievka was only a "Potemkin" village, and that its inhabitants—whether from the state village of Tomakovka or from the private village of Liubimovka is immaterial—were transplanted to this site only for the duration of Catherine's stay in New Russia.

15 Novitsky, J. P., *S beregov Dniepra, Ocherki Zaporozhia*, p. 199. This orchard, the beginnings of which were made by Potemkin, still exists. It was subsequently greatly enlarged by the Mennonites and made the common property of the entire settlement.

16 The name means "Tsar's landing." It was the place where in 1787 Catherine and her entourage had left the boats, which brought them down the Dnieper, for a stay in Potemkin's palace.

rich meadows which the delegates had constantly dangled before them? Disappointment gave way to bitterness. Curses and the fiercest accusations were heaped upon Hoeppner and Bartsch.[17] They had deceived them, sold them to Potemkin, and what not! Eventually the counsel of the saner element triumphed and the majority decided to settle down and begin building houses. They pointed out, after a more thorough investigation, that, even if the land was hilly, it was of a better quality than had at first been thought. This, however, did not convince a vociferous minority which steadfastly maintained that if they refused to settle here the government would in the end give them better land. But their resistance ended in bitter failure. The following spring the government let it be known that the intractable colonists would receive no other land, and if they persisted in their obstinacy they would be put in jail. While this threat had the immediate effect of forcing the troublemakers to give in, the discontent did not disappear and more than once during the next decade discontent and dissatisfaction shook the settlement to its very foundation.

Under the supervision of Hoeppner and Bartsch eight colonies were founded in 1790: Khortitsa, Rosental (Kantserovka), Einlage (Kichkas), Neuenburg (Malashevka), Schönhorst (Vodianaia), Neuendorf (Shirokoe), Alt Kronsweide and Kamp (Ostrov Khortitsa).[18] Many of the colonists tried at first to establish separate farms each on his own allotment of land, but for the sake of protection against a few remaining Cossacks and other outlaws who infested the countryside and who plundered them in the most brazen manner, they had to group themselves and settle in compact villages.

On account of the great poverty of the colonists the condition of the Khortitsa settlement was desperate from the beginning. Since many of the emigrants had lacked their own means of transportation they had left their scant baggage in Riga whence the government had promised to transport it to the place of settle-

---

17 Hildebrandt, *op cit.*, pp. 75-76. D. H. Epp, "Beitraege zur Geschichte der Mennoniten. Jakob Hoeppner," *Der Bote*, July 28 and August 4, 1925.

18 A. Skalkovsky, *Opyt statisticheskago opisania Novorossiiskago kraia* (Odessa, 1850) I, 257-261 in speaking of the Khortitsa settlement erroneously states that the Mennonites were first settled near Berislav and then transferred to Khortitsa. The same error is repeated in Tsentralnyi Statisticheskii Komitet, Ministerstvo Vnutrennikh Del, *Spisok naselennykh mest po svedeniam 1864 goda. Ekaterinoslavskaia gubernii* (St. Petersburg, 1865) p. XXI and in Statisticheskoe Biuro Tavricheskago Gubernskago Zemstva, *Statisticheskii Spravochnik Tavricheskoi Gubernii. Spisok naselennykh mest. Berdianskii uiezd* (Simferopol, 1915) p. 21.

ment.[19] When the baggage arrived it was found that many of the boxes had been looted of their original contents and filled with stones and other ballast. What was left was damaged. The loss of clothing was especially serious since the autumn of 1790 was extremely rainy and the winter severely cold. Due to the protracted war with Turkey the state treasury was nearly empty, so that the government was unable to live up to its promises as regards the loan of 500 rubles. Having paid in Riga one installment of 100 rubles the government paid the remaining 400 rubles during the next eight years in small sums of a few rubles at a time of which money the "director" of the colonies each time pocketed a certain percentage. The lumber which the government furnished for building purposes arrived in 1790 but was of extremely poor quality. Added to all these misfortunes the crops during the first four years were nearly all total failures and the colonists had to be given subsistence out of government stores. All this kept alive the fires of discontent and dissension, which condition doubtless was aggravated by the presence of a very incompetent staff of religious teachers and the suspicion and hatred of a section of the colonists toward Hoeppner and Bartsch.[20]

In the face of all these difficulties the settlement seemed doomed to failure. Fortunately 118 new families arrived from West Prussia between 1793-1796. These on the whole represented a more prosperous class of people. They brought with them 400 horses and a good many head of cattle.[21] In 1797 thirty-two families of the newcomers established two new colonies Schoenwiese, on the right bank of the Dnieper, opposite the southern extremity of the Khortitsa island, and Kronsgarten, some eighty versts north of the main settlement, near the town of Ekaterinoslav.[22] The remaining eighty-six families were temporarily dis-

---

19 A certain Baron Marklovsky had a contract with the government to transport the colonists and their baggage in barges from Dubrovna to Khortitsa.

20 The malcontents finally so poisoned public opinion in the settlement that Hoeppner and Bartsch were excluded from the church. Bartsch, after many petitions, was readmitted. Not so Hoeppner, who refused to be bludgeoned into meek submission. The troublemakers then accused him of misappropriation of public funds, and with the assistance of the unscrupulous director of the colonies succeeded in having Hoeppner arrested, tried and imprisoned, while his property was sold at public auction. The general amnesty issued by Alexander I upon his accession to the throne set Hoeppner free. Subsequent investigation showed that the charges against him were unfounded. A more grateful third generation erected in 1889 a monument to each of the delegates on the occasion of the centennial celebration of the founding of the settlement.

21 Pisarevsky, *Inostrannaia Kolonizatsia,* p. 337. Bondar, S. D., *Sekta mennonitov v Rossii* (v sviazi s istoriei nemetskoi kolonizatsii na iuge Rossii), p. 10.

22 Epp, *Chortitzer Mennoniten,* p. 80. These 118 families were all Frisians, whereas the 228 families of 1788-1789 were largely Flemish. The fact that a number of

tributed among the existing eight colonies until land could be found for them.[23] These 118 families received the loan from the government as stipulated and it seemed that the worst days of the settlement were over. Unfortunately the crops of 1798 and 1799 were again destroyed by drought and grasshoppers. Once more the colonists had to be provided out of government stores. The winters of these two years were unusually cold and much stock was lost. Not only the colonists, but the government also was beginning to doubt whether the Mennonites would ever prosper in the Khortitsa region. Already it had expended on these colonies the large sum of 387,019 rubles, i. e. on average more than 1000 rubles per family.[24] In order to find out what could be done to put the Mennonites, as well as the other settlements in New Russia, on their feet, the government sent the States Councillor, Contenius, to make a thorough investigation of the southern colonies. Contenius thus describes the Khortitsa settlement:

> Nearly all the Mennonites are orderly and clean in their domestic life, sober and honest in their moral life and diligent and industrious in their economic life. In spite of their industry, however, those at Khortitsa will hardly ever achieve a prosperous condition. It is predominantly rolling country on which, due to the dryness of the soil and the lack of rain, the grasses usually burn out and the grains grow poorly. Thus the plowman often tills and plants his field in vain. And few are those who harvest enough to provide for themselves for the entire year. Stock raising alone is of some profit to them. This branch of economy too they are unable to develop to a degree they desire and are accustomed to on account of lack of pasture and hay and the losses which the severe winters cause . . .[25]

Upon Contenius' recommendation the Senate on April 6, 1800 adopted several ameliorative measures. Of the 314 families living in the Khortitsa colonies 150 were to be transferred to some other place. Those who remained in the original eight colonies were to

---

the Frisians founded two separate colonies has sometimes led to the erroneous belief among non-Mennonite writers that this was due to the religious differences between the two groups. Such, however, was not the case, their separate settlement being simply due to the lack of land at Khortitsa to accommodate them.

23 The Khortitsa plan contained some 20,000 desiatins and would have been large enough to supply the entire 314 families with sixty-five desiatin allotments had it not been for the fact that about one-fourth of it (4,739 desiatins) was not suitable for cultivation on account of its hilly character.

24 *P. S. Z.*, XXVIII, No. 21, 909. This sum, of course, included traveling expense, loans, seed-grains, lumber, etc. Of this sum about 360,000 rubles had to be paid back, while the 22,738 rubles traveling expenses were returnable only in case the colonists left Russia within a certain period of years. It took the colonists almost half a century to liquidate that debt.

25 Report of Contenius to the senate in *P. S. Z.*, XXVI, No. 19,372.

receive an additional five-year exemption from the payment of taxes and those that moved a ten year exemption. It was also provided that each colonist was to pay an annual land tax of fifteen kopeks for each of his sixty-five desiatins,[26] and the settlement as a whole was to pay annually two-and-a-half kopeks per desiatin for the surplus land which would accrue to it after the removal of the 150 families.[27] The most important measures, however, were the establishment on April 6, 1800 of a Guardians' Bureau for the colonists in New Russia and the introduction of forms of local government in 1800-1801.

Finally on July 24, 1802 the government not having found for the 150 families any suitable vacant crown land, decided to buy from Privy Councillor Miklashevsky, the estate Nizhniaia Khortitsa, located only a few versts south of the Khortitsa colonies. The estate contained 11,755 desiatins arable and 468 desiatins waste land. The colonists were at first expected to repay the purchasing price of the land, namely 24,000 rubles; however, on account of the poverty of the colonists and since many of them had never received their allotment of land promised them, this debt was cancelled in 1805. Due also to the poverty of the colonists as well as to the proximity of most of the land to the older colonies, only sixty-five of the 150 families actually moved to their land in 1803, founding two new colonies, Nieder Chortitza (Nizhniaia Khortitsa) and Burwalde (Baburka).

New arrivals from Prussia resulted in the establishment of two more colonies between 1809-1812, namely Kronstal (Dolinsk) and Osterwick (Pavlovka).[28] In the course of the next decade the remaining eighty-five of the original 150 families to be transferred accumulated sufficient means to settle on their own land, grouping themselves into four new colonies: Schöneberg (Smolianaia), Neuhorst (Ternovataia), Blumengart (Kapustianka) and Rosengart (Novoslobodka). This completed the Khortitsa settlement, which now comprised eighteen colonies. In 1833 the majority of the inhabitants of Alt Kronsweide moved to a new location, naming it Neu Kronsweide (Vladimirovka). Of the original eighteen colo-

---

[26] The rate of fifteen kopeks was the one offered by the Mennonites in their petition to Potemkin. It was approved by the government on September 7, 1787, and was supposed to remain unchanged forever. Changing conditions, however, and increased value of the land naturally caused this tax rate subsequently to be raised in consonance with the prevailing tax rate all over New Russia.

[27] With the increase of population in the Mennonite colonies and the development of stock raising the value of this surplus land for grazing purposes increased and therefore on November 19, 1817, the government raised the tax rate to fifteen kopeks. *P. S. Z.*, XXXIV, No. 27,149.

[28] Epp, *Chortitzer Mennoniten*, p. 81.

nies only twelve exist today. By the close of the nineteenth century Schoenwiese had become an important industrial center and in the first decade of the present century it was incorporated with the city of Alexandrovsk. Kamp or Insel Khortitsa was forced to sell out to the same city in 1917. Kronsweide and Neuhorst were wiped out by bandits in 1919 and the surviving inhabitants emigrated to Canada after 1923. Einlage, better known as Kichkas, was razed in 1929 to make way for the Dnieprostroi, the famed Soviet power plant on the Dnieper about which so much has been written during the last few years.

The Molochnaia Settlement

No colonists were brought into the country during the short reign of Paul I, but considerable progress was made in bringing order into the chaotic condition of the colonies already established and the reorganization of the central and local colonial administrative machinery. The desire to bring in more Mennonites, however, was not abandoned. An Ukaz of February 17, 1797 to the officials concerned ordered that the privileges and rights promised the Mennonites be fully observed. The colonists were to be informed of this order and to be told that His Imperial Majesty wished that more of their co-religionists would settle in Russia.[29] Three years later, on September 6, 1800 Paul issued the charter of privileges promised the Mennonite delegates in 1787.[30] It confirmed the rights and privileges as set forth in the agreement with Potemkin and also granted several other rights, viz.: The right to dispose of their property according to their customs (except in regard to the land received from the crown), the right to build factories not only in their own colonies, but in any city of the empire,[31] the right to brew beer and vinegar and to distil whiskey for home consumption and for retail sale on their land, and lastly that without their consent no one could establish boarding houses and taverns in their colonies.

No actual Mennonite emigration to Russia took place during the reign of Paul, because of his anxiety not to give Prussia any cause for offense, occasioned by a blunder on the part of J. Isakov, the Russian consul in Koenigsberg.[33] But with the accession of

29 *P. S. Z.*, XXIV, No. 17,813.

30 The charter is to be found in *Ibid.*, XXV, No. 19,546.

31 In their petition Hoeppner and Bartsch had asked for this right only for the cities in New Russia.

33 In February, 1797, Isakov reported to the Vice-Chancellor, Prince Kurakin, that several Mennonite families had expressed to him their wish to settle in Russia. Prince Kurakin asked the consul by letter, dated February 28, to encourage and

Alexander I one of the largest emigrations in Mennonite history set in. This was due in part to the issuance of a new restrictive measure against them in Prussia, and in part to the personal interest of Alexander in the establishment of a larger number of Mennonite colonies in New Russia.

In December 17, 1801, Frederick William III issued a supplement to the edict of July 30, 1789, to the effect that henceforth no Mennonite was to be permitted to increase the number or the size of his landed estates, nor buy real estate in village or city unless such land or real estate was in the actual possession of a Mennonite on the date of publication of this supplement. The Mennonites were to continue to enjoy exemption from military service, which privilege was to descend to their sons. The privilege, however, was to cease with the first change of land ownership. Whoever obtained such a Mennonite landed estate or real estate in town or village by means of purchase, trade, gift, will, legacy, or through marrying the widow, daughter or a relative of the last owner could make no claim to military exemption. None of these restrictions respecting new purchases of real estate was to apply to a Mennonite who was willing to accept military service. On the contrary, he could buy any amount of land wherever he pleased "like any other Christian." Nor were any provisions of previous restrictive measures to be applicable to him, for example, such as contribution to the 5,000 thalers exemption money paid by the Mennonites annually.[34]

This new law naturally caused a great disturbance among the Mennonites. Petition upon petition, and one delegation after another were sent to Berlin to beg the government to rescind the order, or at least to ease its provisions, but to no avail. The only concession the government was willing to make was to offer the Mennonites five years exemption from taxes and exemption from military service until the issuance of another decree if they would settle on the marsh lands in the vicinity of Kalish and Gniezno. Experience had taught the petitioners that there was no assurance

---

assist such a move but to do so secretly. For fear that the Prussian government might open the letter, it was sent by special agent. Isakov thereupon got in touch with the representative of the Mennonites, M. Mierau, asking him to inform "by first mail" the twenty-seven families whom he represented to get ready at once. He also gave Mierau a written assurance that the emigrants would be well received in Russia. Since both Isakov and Mierau had made use of the mails, which violated the intended secrecy of the plan, the government, for fear of compromising itself, thought it advisable to let the matter rest for the time being. G. Pisarevsky, *Pereselenie prusskikh mennonitov v Rossiu pri Alexandre I.* (Rostov-on-Don, 1917), pp. 4-5.

[34] Text of Supplement in W. Mannhardt, *Wehrfreiheit,* pp. LXXXIV-LXXXVII. Also in Pisarevsky, *Pereselenie prusskikh mennonitov,* pp. I-III.

that such a decree might not be issued within a few years; hence the offer was refused and preparations made for an emigration to Russia. The authorities of West Prussia at first seemed quite satisfied that the Mennonites were preparing to leave, "wishing only that by similar measures they might get rid of the Jews."[35] In Berlin, however, these preparations caused some concern. When it became known that more than 150 families had left by the autumn of 1803 the king issued on November 24th of the same year an order in council which took the edge off some of the provisions of the December supplement.[36] This concession, and above all the difficulty of obtaining passports, reduced the size of the emigration, but did not stop it.

The Russian government proceeded at once to take advantage of the discontent of the Mennonites in order to persuade as many of them as possible to emigrate to Russia. As soon as it became evident that the Prussian government would not alter its decision, several hundred Mennonite families from Elbing and Marienburg informed the Russian government through its consul, Trefurt, in Danzig, and through the Khortitsa Mennonites of their wish to settle in New Russia. The government was greatly pleased by this information, particularly by a statement of Trefurt to the effect that this decision was largely due to the reports of their co-religionists in New Russia.[37]

In order not to disclose to the Prussian authorities that it was greatly interested and concerned in the Mennonite emigration, the Russian government asked the Khortitsa colonists to inform their brethren in Prussia of the acceptance of their petition and to urge them to observe strict secrecy and take every precaution in order not to attract the attention of the Prussians. Similar precautions were taken by Contenius, in his correspondence with the Reverend

---

35 Karge, *loc. cit.*, p. 175.

36 *Ibid.*, Quiring, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

37 This testimony brought official commendation from Alexander I for the Department of State Economy and the New Russian Guardians' Bureau.

Contenius, chief judge in this bureau, and to whom in the first place the colonists were indebted for the improvement in their lot, was favored by a special Imperial Rescript on July 3, 1802:

"The Department of State Economy testifies to me of your zealous efforts to improve the condition and welfare of the New Russian Mennonites entrusted to your care. By devoting special attention to these foreigners, I desire not only to strengthen and improve the condition of those already in the confines of Russia but also to attract by methods a greater number of them for settlement on waste land. I therefore direct you not only to continue, but to increase constantly your efforts for the prosperity of the Mennonites under your care. Without disclosing my wish, or the instruction given you, you will, by impressing upon them the advantages which would accrue to them, prompt them to persuade their co-religionists and fellow nationals in foreign countries to come and settle in Rus-

Warkentin, the Mennonite Bishop of Rosenort, West Prussia.[38] The latter had been sent to the Khortitsa settlement in 1794 to settle certain religious matters and remained there until 1802. During his stay in Khortitsa he and Contenius, who often inspected the colonies, became intimate friends. Warkentin was greatly impressed by Contenius' efforts in behalf of the Mennonites and believed that only in Russia was there a future for them. He therefore promised Contenius that upon his return to West Prussia he would use his influence to further the emigration of the Mennonites to Russia. Both men used a great deal of circumspection in their correspondence. In the end, even though their letters were always addressed to third persons, the Prussian government got wind of what was going on, forced Warkentin to surrender all his correspondence and forbade him to spread any information regarding the Russian offers.[39]

On March 28, 1803, the governor general of New Russia, General Bekleshov, was informed of the impending emigration of 150 Mennonite families from Prussia and ordered to select a tract of land for their settlement.[40] On the same date the governor general of Lithuania, Bennigsen, was instructed to see to it that the Mennonites should be received at the frontier "with evident care and consideration," and that a special official be delegated to accompany them to New Russia.[41] On April 10 a sum of 15,000 rubles was appropriated to defray the expenses incident to this emigration.[42]

The problem of selecting a tract of land for the Mennonites occupied the government for some time since it was the intention that the new Mennonite colonies should serve as a sort of experimental station and as models to the surrounding population not only in the production of grain and the breeding of improved strains of stock, but also in the planting of orchards and vineyards and the development of the linen and silk industries. In conformity with such high objectives the New Russian guardian's bureau decided

---

sia. . . . I hope that by a thorough application of your attention to this subject and by a diligent concern for the fulfilment of the task entrusted to you, you will justify the confidence hereby shown you." Pisarevsky, *Pereselenie prusskikh mennonitov,* pp. 14-15.

38 Letter of Contenius to the Minister of the Interior, October 31, 1802. Pisarevsky, *Pereselenie prusskikh mennonitov,* pp. 15-16.

39 Karge, *loc. cit.,* p. 96. For his services in behalf of the emigration Warkentin was awarded a gold medal by the Russian government on April 23, 1804. Friesen, *Geschichte der Mennoniten,* p. 134.

40 *P. S. Z.,* XXVII, No. 20,690.

41 *Ibid.,* No. 20,691.

42 *Ibid.,* No. 20,705.

that the land to be set aside for the newcomers was to meet the following requirements: It must be situated at not too great a distance from the towns and ports of New Russia. It must contain or be adjacent to good river water. It must not be hilly, but a plain suitable for agriculture, containing meadows or land of a similar character. It must, if possible, be situated near the Dnieper to facilitate the delivery of lumber, or be located near some other wooded area.[43]

The finding of a tract of land which would meet all these requirements was not an easy task; for by the beginning of the nineteenth century practically all the best lands in New Russia had already been indiscriminately distributed among courtiers, army and government officials,[44] or handed over to private individuals upon ridiculously easy terms.[45] True, the government still possessed extensive tracts of land in these provinces, which, however, because of their lack of water were suitable chiefly for sheep-rearing. The government therefore considered for a while the possibilities either of evicting one or several landowners who had never fulfilled their obligations, or of purchasing land from private owners. Accordingly the government on March 28, 1803, suggested to Bekleshov the carrying out of a general measure of expropriation of all landowners who had not met their obligations, mentioning specifically the large estate of a certain Vukovich.[46] Before resorting to expropriation a number of estates offered for sale were investigated. However, since most of them were either too small to accommodate the 763 Mennonite families expected to emigrate to Russia, or would not be available immediately because their ownership was in dispute, the government soon abandoned this plan. It became evident also that the eviction of owners who had not lived up to their promises would be a rather protracted procedure. Since many of the would-be colonists had already liquidated their property and were ready to set out for Russia, the government in the end concentrated its attention upon the public domain. Upon the advice of the Ekaterinoslav civil governor, Miklashevsky, two large tracts of land were investigated, one in the uiezds of Elizavetgrad

43 Pisarevsky, *Pereselenie prusskikh mennonitov,* p. 17.

44 This policy of distribution brought such serious conflict with the Zaporozhian Cossacks that the government in 1775 despatched a large army to destroy the Cossack stronghold on the Dnieper.

45 Practically the sole condition was the settling of thirteen peasants during the period of ten years for every 1,500 desiatins received. During this ten year period the owner was also exempted from all taxes and servitudes. Cf. Bagalei, D., *Kolonizatsia Novorossiiskago kraia i pervye shagi ego po puti kultury. Istoricheskii etind,* p. 71.

46 *P. S. Z.,* XXVII, No. 20,690.

and Olviopol (Kherson province) and the other situated on the Molochnaia stream (Tavrida). The second area was eventually selected. It contained some 120,000 desiatins, for the greater part of a rich black soil.[47] Part of it had been occupied by the Nogais, who now were assigned lands in the immediate neighborhood toward the southeast.

The actual emigration began in July, 1803, when ninety-one families received their passports.[48] By November 10th of that year 162 families[49] had left for Russia. As was mentioned above this emigration brought forth Frederick William's order in council of November 24, 1803. When this failed to dampen the emigration fever the Prussian authorities resorted to procrastination, often withholding passports for months even though the prospective emigrants had sold everything and also paid the tenth.

Judging from the occupations of those who applied for passports, the majority of these 162 families must have been poor people.[50] They all received from the government the following financial assistance: ten rubles per person for travelling expenses, fifty rubles per family for forage,[51] 125 rubles per family for the acquisition of implements, stocks, etc., 100 rubles worth of lumber, fifteen rubles for seed grains, and eight kopeks per person per day for food from the arrival at the place of settlement until the first harvest. All this money had to be repaid by the colonists after the expiration of a ten year period of exemption from taxes.[52]

Between July and August, 1804, 166 more families went to Russia. Among these were a number of well-to-do people. Altogether this group of emigrants brought with it money, household goods and implements to the value of 212,719 thalers, besides a great many head of cattle and sheep.[53] Late in the same year Tre-

---

47 It is interesting to note that the Molochnaia land met only one of the requirements put forward by the New Russian Guardian's Bureau, namely that of being a flat country. It was not situated near the Dnieper, nor in the proximity of a town or port, nor did it contain even a trace of a bush, to say nothing of a tree.

48 Pisarevsky, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 40. According to Bondar, *op. cit.*, p. 27 only 150 families.

50 Karge, *loc. cit.*, p. 94.

51 Those who did not possess their own teams were transported by the government and, of course, did not receive the forage money.

52 Isaak, Franz, *Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten*, p. 10 says that the ten rubles for travelling expenses and the fifty rubles forage money were not to be repaid. That is an error, although the Russian authorities at Grodno, where the colonists received the money, had told them that it was not returnable. Cf. Pisarevsky, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

53 According to Trefurt these emigrants were worth a great deal more than 212,719 rubles, possibly twice as much. He says that in view of the fact that the emigrants had to pay the tenth of their property before leaving the country, they

furt despatched another group of twenty-one families,[54] which arrived in Russia early the following year. These received from the government substantially the same financial aid as those of the preceding year. In 1805 only twenty-one families left for Russia. These were worth 34,528 thalers.[55] This abrupt decline in the number of emigrants was due to the procrastination on the part of the Prussian officials in the matter of granting passports[56] and a certain dissatisfaction among the new settlers with the Molochnaia land on account of its treeless character.[57] In 1806 another fifteen families arrived on the Molochnaia.[58] Altogether 385 families had gone to Russia between 1803-1806 and founded eighteen colonies on the Molochnaia.[59]

In view of the fact that a good third of the Molochnaia Mennonites were well-to-do, or even rich people,[60] and the rest received an immediate substantial financial assistance from the government and, further, that their land was more fertile and they themselves better farmers than the Khortitsa settlers, the new settlement from the very first showed signs of growing riches and accumulating comforts. As early as 1809 a Simferopal correspondent of the

---

had stated to the authorities only half the value of their possession.—While some may have succeeded, it would hardly seem possible that many could have deceived the vigilant Prussian authorities to this extent. Perhaps Trefurt was only trying to impress his own government.

54 Varadinov, N., *Istoria Ministerstva Vnutrennikh Del,* I, 164.

55 Of the forty-two families which arrived in Russia in 1805 only twenty-two went to the Molochnaia, the others settling on the estate of a private landowner in the province of Vilna. Varadinov, *op. cit.,* I, 141.

56 On June 14, 1805 Trefurt wrote to the Minister of the Interior: Forty to fifty Menonist families, for the most part very rich people . . . have been waiting eight to nine months for passports to go to Russia. The West Prussian government, however, upon secret instructions from Berlin, is holding them back, trying by every means to persuade them to give up their intention, or, if they persist in their decision, to reduce their finances by delay and unnecessary expenses to such an extent, that after the payment of the tenth they will have left only half of their money by the time they get permission to leave. Pisarevsky, *Pereselenie prusskikh mennonitov,* pp. 46-47.

57 *Ibid.,* p. 49. See also letter of the governor-general, Richelieu, to the Molochnaia Mennonites, dated Odessa, April 2, 1804, quoted in Isaak, *op. cit.,* pp. 9-10.

58 Varadinow, *op. cit.,* I, 164.

59 Isaak, *op. cit.,* p. 12. Quiring, *op. cit.,* p. 17. According to Bondar, *op. cit.,* p. 28 only seventeen colonies and according to Pisarevsky, *op. cit.,* p. 57 nineteen, both of which are in error.

60 According to a quotation in Friesen, P. M., *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Brüderschaft in Russland,* p. 152, from the memoirs of an unknown author who visited the Molochnaia settlement in 1807, sixty-three of the first 322 families which settled there were so well situated that they required no financial aid from the government, while another eighty-nine families possessed each from 10-20,000 gold dukates.—According to Trefurt 169 families refused all pecuniary aid from the government. Pisarevsky, *op. cit.,* p. 58 says that the emigrants of 1803-1806 brought with them not only considerable sums of money but also farm implements, horses, East Frisian cows and Spanish sheep valued at 450,000 rubles.

Severnaia Pochta ("Northern Mail") described the colonies on the Molochnaia in the following words:[61]

> The Mennonists who recently settled in the steppe part of the Crimea, near the Molochnaia waters, are beginning to achieve a state of prosperity, as are also the colonists[62] who have settled in the same district. There are now twenty-six villages in which live 1902 Mennonists and 998 colonists. As is customary with them they have erected substantial buildings and are well equipped in everything. Then, too, they have a great deal of land which richly rewards the tiller without the use of fertilizer. Stock breeding, agriculture and horticulture are carried on with success. This year they have already twenty-five mulberry plantations which contain up to 30,000 trees, planted in regular order. They sell their products at a very good profit in the nearest towns and villages.

The war of 1806-1807 stopped the emigration entirely, but during the following two years ninety-nine families went to Russia.[63] It is not clear whether all of them were directed to the Molochnaia. However, since only one colony was founded here in 1811, it is possible that forty or fifty families[64] remained in Khortitsa and established there between 1809-1812 the two colonies, Kronstal and Osterwick.

Russia's participation in the continental blockade had a disastrous effect upon state finances and this in turn reacted on the colonization policy. The value of the paper ruble, which in 1807 had been sixty-seven kopeks, had fallen to twenty-five kopeks by 1810. The deficit at the beginning of the fiscal year 1810 amounted to 105,000,000 rubles of a budget of 230,000,000 rubles. This compelled the government to cut down the large appropriations which it had previously set aside for purposes of colonization.[65]

---

61 *Severania Pochta ili Novaia Sanktpeterburgskaia Gazeta,* No. 25, Jan. 26, 1810, quoted in Bondar, *op. cit.,* p. 33.

62 By "colonists" he means the Germans who after 1804 founded a number of colonies on the right bank of the Molochnaia stream. This distinction between the two settlements and the two groups of colonists was maintained officially and in private usage. Thus the Mennonites were usually referred to as "mennonity" or "kolonisty-mennonity" and their settlement as "Molochanskii mennonitskii okrug" and the Germans as "Kolonisty" or "nemtsy-Kolonisty" and their settlement as "Molochanskii kolonistkii okrug". Cf., e. g., Klaus, *Nashi Kolonii,* app. II, 36 and 39. This distinction was also quite generally used by the colonists themselves. Thus a Mennonite usually referred to the Germans across the Molochnaia stream as "the colonists." This differentiation between the two groups of colonists doubtless contributed a great deal to the development of a feeling of not only religious, but also racial differences, between the Mennonites and the German Catholics and Lutherans.

63 Pisarevsky, *op. cit.,* p. 64. Friesen, *op. cit.,* p. 74.

64 Usually about twenty-five families founded one colony.

65 Bondar, *op. cit.,* p. 25. Pisarevsky, *Pereselenie prusskikh mennonitov,* pp. 64-65.

As an added measure of economy it was decided to instruct the consular agents to announce to prospective colonists that henceforth no financial assistance whatsoever would be granted, but that those who possessed their own means would be granted land and the same privileges and rights as were accorded to the earlier immigrants.[66] However, the war of 1812 and its aftermath virtually checked all immigration until 1818. It was resumed in 1819 when seventy-five Mennonite families came in. The prohibition of immigration declared in that year did not apply to the Mennonites "in view of the industriousness and the excellent state of farming prevalent among all the Mennonites in New Russia." In 1820 another 179 families entered Russia.[67] In that year the Committee of Ministers decided to admit annually 200 Mennonite families until the Molochnaia district was all settled, for which purpose it appropriated a sum of 300,000 rubles.[68] The Molochnaia Mennonites were asked to inform their co-religionists in Prussia of this decision. No detailed statistics are available as to the number of emigrants that left Prussia after 1820; but in 1827 the Molochnaia district still had enough vacant land to accommodate 600 more families. Therefore a new invitation was extended to the Prussian Mennonites, with the condition that each family deposit with the Russian consular agent a sum of 400 guldens to assure its establishment.[69] No precise figures are available as to the number of Mennonites that responded to this new call up to 1833 when the government decided not to admit any more foreigners as colonists.[70] Even after this decision, however, exceptions were sometimes made as when twenty-six Mennonite families were admitted in 1834[71] and forty families in 1835.[72] According to the *Zhurnal Ministerstva Gosudarstvennykh Imushchestv* ("Journal of the Ministry of State Domain") of June, 1842, the number of Mennonites who entered Russia between 1821 and 1840 averaged twenty families annually.[73] The year 1840 marked the close of the settlement of Mennonites from abroad on the Molochnaia. The settlement at that time consisted of forty-five colonies with a population of 11,381.[74] The twelve colonies which

---

66 *P. S. Z.*, XXI, No. 24,131.
67 Pisarevsky, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
68 Bondar, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
69 *Ibid.*, p. 34.
70 2 *P. S. Z.*, VIII, No. 6,298.
71 Varadinov, *op. cit.*, III, 588.
72 Friesen, *Geschichte der Mennoniten*, p. 80.
73 Quoted in *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnago Proveshchenia*, VI (1842), 46.
74 *Ibid.*

were founded here after 1840 were settled by descendants of the first settlers.[75]

The Samara Colonies

The Prussian constitution of 1850 abolished exemption from compulsory military service on religious grounds. A considerable number of Mennonites from that country, therefore, petitioned the Russian government to permit them to settle in Russia. The ministry of state domain was in favor of granting the petition, but the government rejected it "on account of the political disturbances in Western Europe." In 1851 however, another petition met with better success. On November 19th of that year permission was granted to 100 families to come into the country upon substantially the same conditions as in the case of the earlier Mennonite immigrants, but with the following exceptions: First, exemption from military service was to be granted only for a period of twenty years, upon the expiration of which the colonists had to pay a special exemption fee; secondly, they were not to enjoy the right to brew beer and vinegar, nor to distil whiskey. Each family also had to deposit with the Russian embassy in Berlin a sum of 350 thalers to

---

[75] Isaak, *Molotschnaer Mennoniten*, pp. 12-14, 19 and 26. Quiring, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18. Bondar, *op. cit.*, p. 36. All three authors mention only fifty-six colonies, omitting the commercial and industrial colony, Neuhalbstadt, the foundation of which was laid in 1843, but which was completed only several decades later.
The names and year of foundation of these colonies are:
1804 Halbstadt, Muntau, Schoenau, Fischau, Lindenau, Blumstein, Lichtenau, Münsterberg, Altona.
1805 Schönsee, Ladekopp, Petershagen, Tiegenhagen, Orloff, Tiege, Blumenort, Rosenort.
1806 Fürstenau.
1811 Rückenau.
1819 Lichtfelde, Margenau, Neukirch.
1820 Rudnerweide, Alexandertal, Schardau, Pordenau, Mariental, Grossweide, Franztal and Pastwa.
1821 Alexanderwohl, Fürstenwerder, Gnadenheim.
1822 Tiegerweide.
1823 Liebenau, Eliesabethal.
1824 Wernersdorf, Friedensdorf, Pragenau.
1828 Sparrau.
1832 Konteniusfeld
1835 Gnadenfeld.
1836 Waldheim.
1839 Landskrone.
1843 Neuhalbstadt.
1848 Hierschau.
1851 Nikolaidorf.
1852 Paulsheim.
1854 Kleefeld.
1857 Alexanderkrone, Mariawohl, Friedensruh, Steinfeld.
1862 Gnadental.
1863 Hamberg, Klippenfeld.
? Fabrikerwiese.

assure its establishment without any financial assistance from the Russian government.[76]

A tract of 17,301 desiatins was set aside for the newcomers in the Novouzensk uiezd of the province of Samara, in the immediate neighborhood of the great "Salt Trek", a road upon which the salt from the Elton Sea was conveyed into the interior provinces. Hence the settlement is known as the "Trek Settlement." Although permission was granted officially only to 100 families, the fact that the government set aside for them a tract of land which could easily accommodate almost three times that many families,[77] shows that it actually expected a much larger number of Mennonites to emigrate to Russia.[78] The actual settlement began only in 1855 and was not completed until 1873, during which period the following ten colonies were founded: Koeppental, Hahnsau, Lindenau, Fresenheim, and Hohendorf (between 1855-1862), Lysanderhoeh (1864), Orloff (1867), Valuevka, Ostenfeld and Medental (1868-1873).[79]

In view of the inaccessibility of the Russian documents relating to this settlement it is impossible to ascertain how many families originally settled in these colonies.[80] The few secondary sources available are very incomplete. According to Ehrt 120 families arrived in Russia between 1853-1857,[81] while Klaus gives the figure of 126 for the period of 1855-1864.[82] However, since every family received only the legal norm of sixty-five desiatins, it would not be far from wrong to assume that about 260 families settled on this land between 1855-1873.

On January 22, 1859, the government permitted another 100 families to come to Russia upon conditions similar to those of 1851 with the exception that the period of exemption from taxes was reduced to three years.[83] These colonists, moreover, had to buy their land from the crown.[84] On this occasion a tract of 10,329

---

76 2 *P. S. Z.,* XXVI, No. 25,752 a.

77 Counting sixty-five desiatins per family.

78 Brons, *Ursprung, Entwickelung und Schicksale der altevangelischen Taufgesinnten oder Mennoniten,* p. 308, says that the Russian government had offered land to 260 families. According to Klaus, *Nashi kolonii,* app. II, 16-17 it would seem that plans had been made for the settlement of about 275 families.

79 Bondar, *Sekta mennonitov,* p. 43, n. Quiring, *op. cit.,* pp. 21-22.

80 Quiring, *op. cit.,* pp. 22-24, has tried to ascertain the number of the emigrants from the church records in Prussia, but with little success.

81 Ehrt, *Das Mennonitentum in Russland,* p. 23.

82 Klaus, *Nashi kolonii,* app. II, 16-17.

83 2 *P. S. Z.,* supplement to XXXIV, No. 34,977a.

84 A. M. Egorov, "Opisanie khoziaistva menonitov," *Trudy Imperatorskago Moskovskago Obshchestva Selskago Khoziaistva,* V (1881), 89-90.

desiatins, of which 500 desiatins were not suitable for cultivation, was set aside in the Samara uiezd, province of Samara. On this land 178 families[85] established the following ten colonies: Alexandertal in 1859, Neuhoffnung (Nadezhdino) in 1860, Mariental (Marievka), Grotsfeld (Krotovka) and Muravievka in 1863, Orloff (Orlovka) in 1867, Liebental (Liubimovka), Schönau (Krasnovka), Lindenau and Marienau between 1868-1870.[86] More than two-thirds of the Samara colonists were well-to-do people and these colonies flourished from the very beginning.

The following table summarizes the Mennonite emigration to Russia:

Year	Number of families	Place of Settlement
1787-1788	228	Khortitsa
1793-1796	118	Khortitsa
1803	162	Molochnaia
1804	166	Molochnaia
1804-1805	42	22 to Molochnaia, 20 to Vilna
1806	15	Molochnaia
1808-1809	99	Molochnaia, a few possibly to Khortitsa
1819	75	Molochnaia
1820	179	Molochnaia
1821-1840	400 (about)	Molochnaia
1855-1873	260 (about)	Trek Settlement
1859-1870	178	Alexandertal

[85] Of these 178 families eighty-three came from Galicia. Cf. J. Krasnoperov, "Menonitskoe khoziaistvo v Samarskom uiezde," *Russkaia Mysl*, X (1883), 55.
[86] *Ibid.*, pp. 55 and 57. Egorov, *loc. cit.*, pp. 89-90. Cf. also Quiring, *op. cit.*, p. 22 and *Mennonitisches Lexikon*, I, 22.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE ANABAPTISTS OF MUNSTER

(Concluded)

JOHN HORSCH

Jan Matthys, the fanatical prophet of Haarlem in the Netherlands, had had his eye on Münster for some time. In the summer of 1533 John of Leiden was in Münster for about two weeks and then went to Haarlem to inform Matthys that toleration of all creeds prevailed in this city. The prophet was persuaded that the new era of religious liberty, predicted by Melchior Hoffmann, was now at hand. He believed the persecuted would find a place of refuge in the city of Münster and that in other places also the authorities would soon find it impossible to persecute the dissenters.

The non-Catholic Christians of the Netherlands at that time were, with few exceptions, Melchiorites. They followed a policy of glaring compromise. Upon the advice of Hoffmann they remained nominal adherents of Catholicism, waiting for the promised time of liberty, when they would enter upon a course of full obedience to God's Word, organizing churches and baptizing according to biblical precept. Jan Matthys now announced that this eagerly expected era was at hand. He believed the faith which he taught could at last be practiced without persecution, and began baptizing, promising that those who accepted his message could not be put to death by the wicked. Nevertheless, while he and numerous of his followers found it possible to reach the city of refuge, many of his less fortunate adherents fell into the hands of the authorities and were executed.

On January 5, 1534, Bartholomäus Boekebinder and Willem de Kuiper, two of Jan Matthys' apostles, came to Münster. On their way from Amsterdam they visited many places preaching the message of Melchior Hoffmann and his followers, who called themselves *Bundgenossen* (Covenanters). They claimed to be "endued with power and miracle working none the less than the apostles at the day of Pentecost." The promised time of victory for the truth, when God's commandments could be kept without danger of persecution and death, was at hand. Had not fear fallen upon the opponents of the truth in Münster? Could it not be believed that these developments would be repeated in other places? The opportunity for the practice of baptism without persecution was now an

accomplished fact in Münster, and henceforth the blood of Christians would no more be shed upon the earth.

Rothmann and the other preachers of the city, except Fabritius, were baptized on the day when the two apostles arrived. The latter resumed their journey after two days, while Rothmann and his helpers baptized those who desired it. Within eight days, fourteen hundred persons were baptized, the ceremony being performed not in the churches, however, but in Rothmann's house and in private places. Ready for compromise as heretofore, Rothmann, although he practiced adult baptism, continued as preacher in St. Servatius' Church for some time. But after receiving instructions from Jan Matthys that the time for open renunciation of the dominant faith had arrived, he conducted his final service at St. Servatius' Church on January 25, and after this date preached only in other buildings.

On January 13, John of Leiden and Gert tom Cloister, two more of Matthys' apostles, came to Münster to labor in unison with the preachers. The Council now made another weak effort to check the movement. Three of the preachers, Johann Klopriss, Hermann Stralen and Dionysius Vinne, were led through one of the gates of the city by the officials and bidden to depart. But their friends led them back in triumph through another gate. And when it was rumored that the bishop planned a sudden attack, hoping to take the place by the aid of his friends within the city, preparations for defence were made at once. On the evening of January 28 companies of armed men were seen in the streets, and sentinels were placed at the gates. Those who sided with the bishop kept themselves in hiding in their houses, while the leaders of Rothmann's party assembled in the house of Knipperdolling to take counsel concerning the measures to be taken toward these "enemies within the gate." Could Rothmann hope to defend the place against the bishop when there were numerous enemies within the walls? Could they think of undertaking to drive out their opponents? It was finally decided that no one should be compelled to leave the city. To protect the Lutherans and Catholics, the Council, with the consent of the heads of the guilds, published a decree, ordering that no one should be molested or persecuted for his faith.

Within a short time the bishop collected an armed force near the city. Then again an uproar took place. Five hundred armed men of Rothmann's party took possession of the market place and the city hall, while their opponents lay armed in a strong position around the Church of Our Lady. The bishop's forces were near the city, and the burgomaster, Hermann Tilbeck, received a letter

from him promising immediate assistance. But Tilbeck for some reason preferred to intercept the bishop's letter and make a compromise with the opposing party. On February 11, it was agreed that every one should be protected in the exercise of his faith, and Rothmann's party promised to obey the Council in non-religious matters. A few days later Tilbeck himself was baptized by Rothmann. About the same time the prophet Jan Matthys arrived in the city. Many Catholics and Lutherans now left the place, among them the syndic von der Wieck. On February 23 the regular election of the city Council took place, and Bernhard Knipperdolling was elected burgomaster.

But the city was in fact no longer ruled by the Council; the prophet Jan Matthys had become the real ruler. It seemed obvious that the city could not hope to hold its own if it was divided against itself, but to the murderous prophet of Haarlem it was not sufficient that the opponents should be driven out. On February 25 he disclosed his plans to put to death "the godless" remaining in the city. All "the wicked," i. e., those who failed to acknowledge him as the prophet of God sent to usher in the divine kingdom, should be destroyed. But Knipperdolling objected, urging that all magistrates and authorities in the surrounding provinces would rise against them as one man if the citizens of Münster were slain.

The prophet was finally prevailed upon to lengthen the day of grace for the wicked to March 2, giving them opportunity to leave the city until that time. All who then remained and failed to accept his message should be killed with the sword. Now followed the driving out of those who would not be baptized. Armed agents of the prophet were in evidence everywhere driving out the citizens that were not of their party. Men and women, young and old, including the sick, were expelled from their homes in the cold season of the year and robbed of the personal property they attempted to carry with them. Many accepted baptism, not from conviction but as a matter of expediency. On the market place the preachers stood ready to baptize those who preferred to remain in the city. By March 2 the wicked had been driven out; church and state had become identical at Münster. The blacksmith Hubert Ruescher who had the boldness to call Matthys a deceiver was killed by the prophet himself in spite of the protest of Tilbeck and others.

But the prophet Jan Matthys had in the city a rival who coveted his power. This was John of Leiden who later confessed a knowledge through revelation that Matthys should be killed by the enemies of God. On April 5, Matthys, with a few men went forth from the city to drive away the army of the enemies that

surrounded Münster. Needless to say, he perished miserably. There is reason to believe that the wily John of Leiden conceived this plan to get Matthys out of the way. At any rate the way in which the latter met his death indicates that he believed himself a miracle working prophet. While he had fallen into appalling error, he believed his own message. After his death John of Leiden usurped the rule of the unfortunate city.

It has been supposed that Rothmann, after his baptism, and before Jan Matthys became the leader at Münster, was a representative of the great Anabaptist denomination of the Upper Country (South Germany and Switzerland), generally known as the Swiss Brethren. But an honest comparison will reveal the most radical differences between the Swiss Brethren and the party of Rothmann.

First of all it should be noted that in the conception of the church and of church discipline there was a far-reaching contrast between the two parties. The Swiss Brethren insisted on establishing New Testament churches, implying separation from the national churches. There were in Switzerland and the Tyrol many "Halb-Taeufer" (Semi-Anabaptists) who accepted the view that believers' baptism is the true baptism, but because of persecution and for other time-serving reasons they, like Rothmann prior to January 5, 1534, refused to be baptized. They would not identify themselves with the Swiss Brethren and were not owned by them as brethren. Conrad Grebel of Zurich wrote to Thomas Münzer in September, 1524, that the baptism of believers should go hand in hand with the organization of churches; that baptism should not be practiced except as a token of reception into the church. Rothmann, on the other hand, when he found it convenient to receive baptism, did so with the evident understanding that this step should be kept secret while he retained his office as preacher in one of the city churches. The prophet of Haarlem had given orders that his followers should, until further notice, not openly separate themselves from the ruling church; in his opinion the time for organizing the new church was not yet. A little later, as already mentioned, at the command of the prophet, Rothmann resigned his office in the church of St. Servatius.

If the Münsterites, before their plan of organization was carried out, showed radical contrasts when compared with the Swiss Brethren, their organization, as it was effected, indicated that they were moving still more in the opposite direction. Jan Matthys did not organize a New Testament church, but an exclusive state church. On this vital point he followed the example of Zwingli and

Luther, effecting an organization which, in the eyes of the Swiss Brethren, did not deserve the name of a church. There was scarcely any resemblance between the Münsterite state church and a New Testament church. Adult baptism was practiced at Münster, not believers' baptism. People were driven to baptism, as it were, at the point of the sword. The basis of believers' baptism, namely the voluntary principle, implying personal decision, was rejected. Those who refused to accept the message of the prophet were persecuted. The new Zion was to harbor only those who had been baptized, but it goes without saying that their own unbaptized children were not included in the number of those who were driven out by the Münsterites. To make all inhabitants of a given state members of the church necessitated the practice of infant baptism.

The Swiss Brethren principle of liberty of conscience was foreign to Münsterite teaching. The extent of the Münsterite organization was identical with the borders of their state. Every responsible inhabitant was compelled to accept the national creed. The rulers of the state were the rulers of the church. The people were not organized into congregations, they formed one vast multitude which met for worship in the market place. Here also the Lord's Supper was observed. Apparently the leaders feared that objectionable ideas might be taught the people if there were various preaching places.

A vital difference existed also on the point of church discipline. The Swiss Brethren held the exercise of discipline to be one of the most characteristic functions of a true Christian church. They emphasized the need of scriptural discipline, and this was one of the fundamental points on which the Zwinglians differed from them. The Münsterite multitude, also, which was led by Rothmann, Matthys and John of Leiden, knew no church discipline, no expulsion from the church. This was in keeping with Melchior Hoffmann's opinion on the unpardonableness of all sin committed against better light.

This doctrine was fully accepted by the Münsterites.[13] If sin can not be forgiven, the opinion of the Swiss Brethren that the transgressor is to be helped through discipline, was untenable. In that case practically all transgressors were reprobates who could have no part with God's people. Since church and state were closely united at Münster, it was not practicable to exclude the supposed reprobates from the church and not from the state. Hence transgressors were put to death. There is extant a list of transgressions

[13] The unpardonableness of knowingly committed sin was also taught by Münsterites in the Netherlands. Compare *Zeitschrift f. d. hist. Theologie*, 1864, p. 509.

which were to be punished with death at Münster. Almost all sins conceivable are named in this list such as profanity, disobedience, deception, avarice, lying, slander, evil words, wrath, envy, contention, etc. It goes without saying that it was found impossible to take to account every one guilty of such transgressions. The state executioner, Knipperdolling, had authority, with the approval of John of Leiden, to put to death those whose guilt was evident to him. In the Lutheran and Zwinglian states also the punishment of transgression by the arm of the law was supposed to be a substitute for church discipline. In Basel the ban was introduced by Oekolampad; the excommunicated were to be expelled from the land, but the authorities found it impossible to execute this ban.

Another fundamental difference is readily noticeable on the principle of nonresistance. The political, demagogical feature in Rothmann was entirely foreign to the leaders of the Swiss Brethren. Their ever emphasized doctrine of nonresistance did not admit of the lust for political power. To bear the sword, as did the followers of Rothmann, was in the opinion of the Swiss, not admissible for a Christian.

Baptism, as practiced by the Swiss Brethren, was not accepted as valid by the Münsterites. We have seen that Melchior Hoffmann had administered baptism to his followers for a short time, and was soon led to believe that he had erred by introducing the rite without special divine authorization. All who practiced baptism previous to the great change for which he was waiting, did, in his opinion, "an imperfect, invalid work." Later it was believed by many Melchiorites that the authority to baptize was vested only in the prophet Jan Matthys and those whom he commissioned, hence not in the Swiss. Hoffmann recognized Luther and Zwingli as the beginners of the movement in which he was laboring and as his own predecessors, but ignored the great leaders of the Swiss Brethren.

Rothmann also haughtily ignored the great party of the South German and Swiss Anabaptists. In his book *The Restitution* he says the restitution of true Christianity was begun through Martin Luther: "Then behold how through Erasmus, Luther, and Zwingli the beginning was made, but through our brother, John of Leiden . . . the truth has been gloriously established."[14] The great leaders of the Swiss Brethren were never mentioned in the writings of the Münsterites. In their opinion the Swiss Brethren represented a lost cause; they had erred by practicing baptism prior to the be-

[14] *Restitution, Neudrucke deutscher Litteraturwerke* No. 77 and 78; Halle A. S., 1888, p. 17.

ginning of the new era, and they erred again in refusing to make baptism a token of incorporation into the kingdom of God which had its headquarters in Münster. All who postponed the practice of the ordinances of Christ to "a more convenient season" (as did Schwenckfeld and others), or who (like Hoffmann and the Münsterites) believed a new era to have begun, were opponents of the great party of the Upper German Anabaptists. A trustworthy chronicler says, in 1535, of the Münsterites: "All other Anabaptists, wherever they may be, are condemned (damned) by them."

Returning to our narration of developments in Münster, the new leader claims first of all our attention. John of Leiden undoubtedly possessed qualities that make for leadership and was of a religious turn, but withal was an utterly abject character. The contemporary chroniclers of the Hutterite Brethren speak of him as demon-possessed and this characterization is probably not far amiss. Not the least prominent feature of his personality may be designated as demoniacal. The ability to fall into a trance and prophesy he had, as it were, at his fingers ends. His revelations always came at the right time for his purpose, but later, when a prisoner of the bishop, he confessed that at least in one instance he had knowingly deceived the people.

John Beuckels, called John of Leiden, was born in 1509, the illegitimate child of the burgomaster of a village near Leiden in Holland, and a bond woman who was a native of the political district of which Münster was the capital. His educational opportunities were limited. He learned the tailor's trade and traveled in various provinces of the Netherlands as well as in England. In Leiden he married the widow of a boatman and opened a tavern. He also engaged in mercantile enterprises, but without success. In the literary societies called the "Rederijkers" at Leiden, he became a prominent figure and was popular as a player and poet. In consequence of his failure in business he secretly left his family in the summer of 1533 and went to Münster where he remained a few weeks. Having returned to Leiden he made common cause with the prophet Jan Matthys and was sent as an apostle to Münster, as related above.

After Matthys' death, John of Leiden called the people of Münster together in the market place and in an address informed them that God had revealed to him that Matthys must die, for no man, but God alone should be honored in Zion. Knipperdolling could testify to the truth of his words, said John. And Knipperdolling arose to bear the desired testimony. He said that John had predicted the death of Matthys before it occurred. John deemed

it advisable to assume the reigns of leadership only gradually. During the lifetime of Matthys he kept himself in the background and only after he had done the people great service as an organizer and military leader did he dare to make himself ruler.

Nominally the city continued to be ruled by the Council. Not long after Matthys' death John announced that he had a revelation to the effect that the burgomaster Knipperdolling should become the sword bearer and his office should be to punish the wrongdoers. Knipperdolling accepted the charge, recognizing doubtless that his former office as the head of the Council had been deprived of its authority. Then early in May, 1534, John again fell into a trance and received a revelation that the Council should be dissolved and twelve men ordained as "the elders of the twelve tribes of Israel" to rule the new Israel according to divine law, as contained in the Old Testament Scriptures.

The twelve chosen men were friends of John, on whom he could rely. Nevertheless he ordained that "all that the elders, after unanimous counseling, deem profitable for the new Israel, shall be announced and proclaimed to the church of Christ and to the people of Israel by the prophet John of Leiden, the faithful servant of the Most High and of the honorable authorities." As already intimated, a decree was published by the twelve elders, ordaining that sin of every description, including wrath, envy, etc., should be punished by death. "Whoever transgressed the commandments or laws which they had decreed and adopted," says a contemporary chronicler, "they punished with the sword." Later it was ordered that in certain instances the death sentence could be changed to a milder punishment; grace could be proclaimed, however, only through the mouth of the prophet, John of Leiden.

Daily the twelve elders met in the city hall to discharge their duties, and John of Leiden never failed to attend their sessions. Nominally the commonwealth of Münster had a republican form of government, but in plain fact John was the ruler. And it must be conceded that in organizing ability he easily surpassed all other men in "the new Israel." He changed the city into a military camp. With skill and circumspection every one was assigned to such work as he was able to do. Women and children assisted in perfecting the strong fortifications of the city. The watch service on the wall was thoroughly organized. Often in night time John himself was seen on the wall to assure himself that his orders were strictly carried out. Powder was made in special buildings; the weapons for defence were kept in best condition. The city contained a few thousand men able to bear arms. The Münsterites were better

organized and had far better military discipline than the army of siege which surrounded the city. By sallies they imposed great loss upon the enemies and often returned with valuable supplies and ammunition.

The bishop, supported by the rulers of Cleve and the electorate of Cologne, made a signal attempt to take the city by storm. After a few days of heavy bombardment the city was attacked on all sides by the besieging army on May 25, 1534. The undertaking failed miserably. Many of the bishop's warriors were killed, while the Münsterites lost only a few men. The position of the prophet was greatly strengthened through this success; his military leadership had stood the test. The time had now come when the prophet dared to attempt the effecting of a long cherished plan.

He now declared that when he received the revelation of Jan Matthys' approaching death in battle it was also revealed to him (although he lived in wedlock at the time) that he should marry Matthys' wife. To the dismay of the better class of the Münsterites he advanced the view that the new Israel must follow the footsteps of the old on the point of plurality of wives. While it was right, he held, that among the saints transgressions against the seventh commandment should be severely punished nevertheless, "a man should not be bound to one wife, but might wed as many as he desired." According to the testimony of Johann Klopriss, which is corroborated by other conclusive evidence, "the prophet John of Leiden alone has first introduced the doctrine of polygamy, but the others were against it." Again Klopriss says, "All the preachers in Münster, together with the whole community, were against polygamy, but the king instructed them with the [Old Testament] Scriptures and urged them that they must accept it."[15] John of Leiden himself corroborated this testimony.[16]

Rothmann and the other preachers at first persistently resisted him on this point.[17] For eight days John debated the question with the preachers in the city hall. Finally he asserted that all who further contradicted and opposed the institution of polygamy would be considered reprobates. This meant that they were in immediate danger of their lives, since all sin was to be punished by death. By such arguments the preachers were finally led to believe that the prophet was in the right. In consequence Rothmann preached on three successive days in the market place, endeavoring to show that plural marriage was the divinely appointed plan for

15 Niesert, *Münsterische Urkundensammlung,* Coesfeld, 1826, p. 122.
16 *Ibid.,* pp. 122, 135.
17 Detmer, H., *Kerssenbrochs Wiedertäufergeschichte,* Münster, 1900, p. 619.

the new Israel. Polygamy was instituted and all persons of marriageable age were ordered to marry. Unmarried women were compelled to accept the first man to ask their hand. Terrible conditions prevailed in the city in those days. Somewhat later John of Leiden gave orders that men must not ask for a woman's hand in groups but singly, and women had the right to give a negative answer.

But not a few of the Münsterites showed more moral backbone than Rothmann and the preachers. Many testified publicly against the proposed highly offensive practice. Great dissension obtained. On July 29, 1534, two hundred armed men, led by Heinrich Mollenhecke, appeared on the market place of the city. They seized John of Leiden, Knipperdolling, Rothmann and the other preachers and told them they would be set free only on the promise to abolish polygamy. When the leaders declined to promise, they were thrust into prison. Mollenhecke and his friends decided that the new Israel had forfeited its right of existence. They saw no promising future for the kingdom, even if John was put out of the way; hence they believed it best to deliver up the city to the bishop.

But while Mollenhecke and his friends were counselling concerning the proper steps to be taken to obtain favorable terms from the bishop, the friends of John under the leadership of Herman Tilbeck, organized themselves. Mollenhecke and his companions were forced to retreat to the city hall. They were finally overpowered and John with his accomplices was released. He took bloody vengeance. Mollenhecke, with forty-eight men, was cruelly executed. Even after this a few men mustered sufficient courage to denounce polygamy openly. They also were executed. A Münsterite said in the hearing of John of Leiden, what was presented as God's word was but adultery and debauchery. John drew his sword and killed him instantly.[18] Thereafter it seems, no one dared to contradict.

John of Leiden had become master of the situation and had fully accomplished his purpose. Besides Matthys' widow he took fifteen other wives, among them the daughter of Knipperdolling. Rothmann followed his example on a smaller scale. By the arguments advanced in favor of polygamy in his book *The Restitution,* Rothmann has set an abiding monument to his own weakness of character and shame. The prophet appointed Rothmann as his "spokesman," and he became his willing tool.

It may be recalled that greater religious leaders than Rothmann have showed themselves weak in their attitude to the ques-

[18] Niesert, *Urkundensammlung,* p. 153.

tion of plurality of wives. Luther and Butzer consented to the bigamy of the Landgrave of Hesse and defended their position from the Old Testament Scriptures. But Luther never had in mind that bigamy or polygamy should be generally permitted. After the Landgrave had taken a second wife, one of his theologians, Heinrich Lening, wrote a book defending polygamy in Münsterite fashion as a general practice, and printed it at the expense of the landgrave. Luther then wrote a reply refuting the arguments advanced by Lening. But as early as September, 1531, he advised the queen of Henry VIII of England not to consent to divorce, suggesting rather that the king take another wife according to the example of the patriarchs. And Melanchthon in the same year asserted that polygamy is not forbidden by divine law. There is a slight possibility that Rothmann knew of these opinions of the Wittenberg reformers.

Polygamy as it obtained in Münster, has, above everything else, given the Münsterite cause a criminal aspect. Nearly all the contemporary chroniclers, including the bitterest foes of the Münsterites, state correctly that John of Leiden is responsible for this practice at Münster. At a later time it was generally asserted that the principle of polygamy was an integral part of Anabaptism and that all Anabaptists were Münsterites in disguise. The fact was ignored that even John of Leiden, after his imprisonment, confessed at last that the introduction of polygamy could not be justified. The Münsterites defended polygamy in the above mentioned book *Restitution,* but not in their later books. Heinrich Gresbeck in his history of the Anabaptists of Münster asserts that later "polygamy became unpopular in Münster and its ungodliness was realized."[19]

But John of Leiden's ambition had not reached its goal with his victory on the point of polygamy. The prophet aspired to nothing less than kingship over the city, nay over the world! The opportune moment seemed to have come when the new Israel, under his leadership, had won another great victory against the army of siege. An attempt made by the besieging army to build a high wall just outside the wall of the city, in order to assist the soldiers in their attack, ended in failure. Now one more great effort was made to conquer the city by storm. The bishop sent a message offering the Münsterites full amnesty if they laid down their arms and surrendered the place. Haughtily this offer was refused by John of Leiden. On the morning of August 31, 1534, after a severe bombardment lasting several days, the city was attacked at six

19 Cornelius, *Geschichtsquellen,* II, p. 67.

points. Orders had been given to let the soldiers of the army of siege surmount the first wall fortifications before fire was to be opened. So terrible was the slaughter that the soldiers were compelled to make a hasty retreat. Now the reserves of the bishop's army advanced—to no avail. The women poured boiling lime on the enemies from the walls; others had made wreaths, dipped them in hot pitch, set them on fire and threw them over the necks of the soldiers that attempted to gain the wall. The battle lasted till night. It ended in a crushing defeat of the attacking army. The bishop must have considered it lucky that the Münsterites did not pursue his army outside the city wall.

The position of leadership held by John of Leiden was strengthened by this success. The time now seemed opportune for the realization of his greatest ambition. One of his creatures, the prophet Johann Dusentschuer, early in September, 1534, called the people together to the market place and proclaimed through revelation that John of Leiden should become king of the new Zion; that he should surpass in authority all the kings on the earth; and that he should sit on the throne of David until God the Father should demand from him the kingdom. Dusentschuer asked the elders for the sword which they had been given as a token of their authority. Handing it to John he anointed him saying, "Upon the command of the Father I anoint thee to be king of the people of God in the New Temple; and in the presence of all the people I proclaim thee to be the ruler of the new Zion."

John sank to his knees praying. Then he addressed the multitude saying that long ago had God revealed this to him, but he was compelled to keep silence, for it was the pleasure of the Most High to proclaim it through the mouth of another. Against his own inclination, he said further, he, an inexperienced young man accepted the heavy burden, but who was he that he dared to resist the divine call? The people did not show any enthusiasm, but no one dared to contradict. After Münster had been conquered and John made a prisoner, he confessed that he had received no revelation concerning his kingship, but the thought had occurred to him that a king should be chosen in Münster and that he should be the favored one.

Immediately the new king surrounded himself with an imposing court. Priestly vestments were found in the city and the former tailor, John of Leiden, had them converted into royal robes. The royal insignia included a golden chain which supported a ball representing the earth and bearing the inscription, "A king of righteousness everywhere." One of John's wives, the former widow of

Jan Matthys, was made queen. Numerous offices were created to complete the court. John of Leiden ruled in untold arrogance over the New Israel. With great ostentation in wearing apparel and ornaments he showed himself to the people three times weekly sitting on an elaborate throne in the market place. The distinguished men of his court were gathered around him on such occasions, all decked with elaborate vestments. Those who approached his throne were compelled to fall on their knees, and when in solemn processions he walked through the streets, the people also knelt before him.

Knipperdolling somewhat later made an attempt to displace John of Leiden. He received a revelation, so he asserted, that while John was king according to the flesh, he (Knipperdolling) was called to be a spiritual king. He learned to his sorrow that such revelations were not permissible in Zion. John had him imprisoned, but saw best to deal leniently with him. After some time Knipperdolling changed his mind and was released. On October 13, 1534, Dusentschuer came forward with a new revelation; apostles should be ordained to spread the message of the new Zion. Twenty-seven men, among them Vinne, Klopriss, and Stralen, were sent forth. Many of them fell into the hands of the authorities and were executed.

In the month of October, 1534, Rothmann wrote his principal work, *Restitution,* of which we have made mention. It was later printed in a second edition (probably at Marburg) by the order of Landgrave Philip of Hesse. In December he wrote the booklet *On Revenge,* in which he endeavored to show that the day of revenge over the wicked was now at hand; the sword was committed to the saints for the destruction of the godless. Those who would have a part in the kingdom of God should come to Münster where the throne of David was set up. It was hoped that through the spreading of these books and other means of propaganda the sympathizers of the Münsterites would be induced to organize troops to come to the aid of the besieged city. From a few points in the Netherlands bands of men and women did start for Münster, but none of them reached the city. The Netherlandian government in Brussels entertained hopes of incorporating the city and bishopric of Münster into its domain; the court of the Netherlands was willing, with that end in view, to enter into negotiation with the "Munsterite Anabaptists.[20] But the latter realized that this would mean the restoration of Romanism. They could not expect any aid for their cause from that source.

20 *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen,* 1899, pp. 1-19.

A girl of Münster, named Hille Feyken, having heard the story of Judith (as contained in the apocryphal book of Judith) who killed the great enemy of Israel, Holofernes, undertook a similar feat, attempting to take the life of the bishop of Münster. She reached one of the besiegers' camps in safety and told a plausible story, offering to betray the city. But one of the men who had united with the Münsterites in order to be permitted to remain in the city, named Herman Ramers, risked his life and stole out of the city to warn the bishop. Hille Feyken was executed.

In December, 1534, the governments of a few other provinces agreed to aid the bishop in the siege of the city, and a few months later the siege was again greatly strengthened, the German empire as a whole taking part in the attempt to conquer Münster. The Münsterites believed, so Johann Klopriss testified, "if the whole world would besiege the city they would nevertheless prevail over them through divine power."[21] Famine obtained since the autumn of 1534. John of Leiden prophesied that the city would be relieved by Easter. When the appointed time came he asserted his prophecy had reference to spiritual aid.[22] He saw himself compelled to permit old men, women and children to leave the city. In a pitiful condition they reached the camp of the besieging army. Some of them were given their freedom on the condition that they abjure their errors. Very many were executed with the sword. Early in June, 1535, about 200 such fugitives were killed within four days time.

Two books of Rothmann were written in 1535. In the first he defends the view that the history of the world is to be divided into three dispensations: The first extended from Adam to Noah; the second, to the coming of Christ, for which John of Leiden was to prepare the way; the third, the dispensation of Christ was about to begin.

Toward the end of the spring of 1535 it was realized that the city could not hold out much longer. The Münsterites made successful sorties in which they took provisions and ammunition from the enemy, but the famine increased from day to day. For the amusement of the people John of Leiden gave feasts in the market place, followed by dancing in which he himself took part till late at night. Theatrical plays were also given. But these worldly diversions failed to satisfy the starving people of the city.

Münster was finally conquered through treason. Hans Eck and Heinrich Gresbeck, both deserters from Münster, betrayed

[21] Niesert, *Urkundensammlung*, p. 128.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

the nature of the fortifications, indicating the weak places and showing how the city could be entered. On the night of June 24 to 25, during a violent thunder storm, they led about four hundred of the bishop's troops into the city, taking the sentinels by surprise. But the invaders neglected to protect the gate by which they had entered, and hence the larger army that was to follow them found the gate closed and in charge of the Münsterites. The four hundred men inside of the walls were surrounded. Capitulation seemed inevitable. But through another gate, which was opened to them, the army of siege gained entrance. The city was conquered with terrible slaughter. John of Leiden, Knipperdolling and Krechting were made prisoners. Rothmann is said to have sought and found death in battle. The Roman Catholic creed was restored in the city by the bishop.

On January 22, 1536, John of Leiden, Knipperdolling and Krechting were tortured to death with red hot pinchers on a scaffold which had been erected on the market place in Münster. The bishop was present to witness the execution. The bodies of the three culprits were placed in iron cages and suspended from the tower of St. Lambert's Church.

John of Leiden, in the first period of his imprisonment, defended Münsterite doctrine and practice, but later he offered, if his life be spared, to persuade the Anabaptists everywhere (or make attempts to do so) to conform to the practice of the dominant churches and have their infants baptized. Toward the end of his imprisonment he confessed to the Hessian divine Anton Corvinus that he was guilty of teaching great errors, particularly as concerned polygamy and divine kingship, and that he never had divine revelations. Before his death he indicated deep and sincere repentance and regret for all the evil he had done. He confessed that if he had been made to suffer death ten times over, he had deserved it.[23]

[23] Loeffler, K., *Die Wiedertäufer zu Münster* 1534-1535, Jena, 1923, p. 267.

PRESIDENT GRANT AND THE MENNONITE IMMIGRATION FROM RUSSIA

Ernst Correll

The position taken by President Grant in regard to the prospective Mennonite immigration from Southern Russia to Kansas, the Dakota territory, Nebraska, and Minnesota has never been fully investigated. It is generally known, of course, that these Mennonites were on the trek because a vigorous russification policy threatened century old privileges in regard to their conscientious objections to military service, etc. A large proportion of the Mennonites in Russia decided to evacuate their land. Similarly, a group of the Mennonites in Prussia (who were of the same original Dutch stock) preferred to emigrate rather than submit to new restrictions on freedom of conscience which they had previously more fully enjoyed. In their quest for land and for freedom of conscience preliminary negotiations were apparently first started with the British-Canadian authorities, who competed with the United States interests in this country in the immigration. Canada responded the more sympathetically to inquiries in regard to freedom from military service since earlier Canadian laws had granted exemption to Ontario Mennonites. So far as the Mennonites in the United States were concerned no such definite legal position was enjoyed although compromises had been worked out more or less satisfactorily during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. When the delegates of the prospective Mennonite emigrants from Russia became interested in the western lands of the United States they hoped the national government would grant them universal exemption.

So far the only sources of information on this interesting question have been the following:

1. Professor Gertrude S. Young, South Dakota State College, in "A Record concerning Mennonite Immigration, 1873," *The American Historical Review,* Vol. XXIX, No. 3, April, 1924, presented translated portions of the German diary of Paul Tschetter, one of the delegates of the prospective emigrants (Hutterian branch) who petitioned the President in person in regard to the desired exemption from military service and from other official duties which would interfere with their religious concepts. Similarly C. Henry Smith, *The Coming of the Russian Mennonites,* Berne, 1927, (pp. 72-74) quoted the diary of Paul Tschetter as did Georg Leibbrandt in his articles on "The Emigration of the German Mennonites from Russia to the United States and Canada in 1873-1880," *The Mennonite*

Quarterly Review, October, 1932, and January, 1933. In the meantime "The Diary of Paul Tschetter, 1873" had appeared *in extenso* translated and edited by J. M. Hofer, in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review,* April, 1931, 112-127; July, 1931, 198-220. This particular source has furnished the most complete information so far but has failed to receive critical attention.

2. *Memoirs of Peter Jansen,* Beatrice, Nebraska, 1921, pages 35-36, in which reference is made to an interview which his father, Cornelius Janzen (or Jansen) former merchant in Berdiansk, Russia, and distinguished representative of the Mennonites in Prussia and Russia, held with President Grant in the summer of 1873. No exact date is given by Peter Janzen. John B. Wood who introduced the Janzens, father and son, to President Grant "explained to him our mission and that we expected many thousands of our people to follow us during the next few years to settle upon the vast prairies of the West. The President became very much interested and sent for Secretary of the Interior Columbus Delano." (Peter Jansen, *op. cit.,* pp. 35-36. Cf. C. Henry Smith, *op. cit.,* pp. 74-76). No further statements on the position taken by President Grant or Secretary Delano are found in the *Memoirs.*

3. German translation of an excerpt relating to his Annual Message to Congress of December 1, 1873, in which President Grant referred to "representatives of a large colony of citizens of Russia," who were the prospective Mennonite emigrants. (*Der Mennonitische Friedensbote,* Milford Square, Pennsylvania, Dec. 15, 1873, p. 188) and (*Herold der Wahrheit,* Elkhart, Indiana, Jan., 1874, page 9).

4. A Memorial from "Some of the Emigrants from Russia and Prussia, called Mennonites" addressed to the United States Congress and presented to the Senate on Jan. 12, 1874, the text of which is quoted in full by C. Henry Smith, *op. cit.,* pages 77-79. It contains this paragraph: "By examining your Constitution and country we find the full assurance that, under your Constitution and laws, we shall find the liberty we so earnestly desire, and the sentiment expressed by President Grant, in his message of March 3, 1873, gives us great encouragement." Cf. *Congressional Record,* 43:1, II, Part 1, January 12, 1874, page 570.

Research in the Archive Section of the U. S. Department of State resulted in the collection of original documents, copies of which follow. The documents present a more complete picture of the situation than had been possible on the basis of the sources listed above. A better estimate of the attitudes and sentiments of both sides can now be made. New leads for further research are apparent, thus helping toward a more intelligent understanding of personalities and factors involved.

Comparison of these official documents with those in the sources listed above reveals, among other differences, an additional signer of the petition, Tobias Unruh, and a variance in date, in that Tschetter in his diary used the old style calendar to which he had been accustomed in Russia. A check of the sources shows that the

petition was prepared and translated on August 7th, (Gregorian Calendar) or July 26th (Julian Calendar). It was presented by the three delegates on August 8th (July 27th in Tschetter's Diary) having undoubtedly been pre-dated when prepared the day before. The next day, August 9th, it was endorsed by the President.

DOCUMENTS

Jay Cooke, Trustee of the Northern Pacific Railroad, introducing M. L. Hiller to President Grant, July 31, 1873. (*Filed with petition of August* 8, 1873.)

Source:

U. S. Dept. of State, Misc. Letters, Aug., 1873, Part 1.

Trustees' Office, Northern Pacific Railroad
Land Department
114 South Third Street: Second Floor

Jay Cooke.
J. Edgar Thomson, Trustees. Philadelphia, July 31, 1873.

His Excellency
U. S. Grant, President of the U. S.
Dear Sir:

I take pleasure in introducing M. L. Hiller, Esq., an eminent German citizen of New York, who is accompanied by a delegation of Mennonites from Russia, who design emigrating to this country in large numbers, and settling in our great Northwest whence they have just returned after a full examination of the beautiful lands in Minnesota and Dakota. Should this emigration take active form and shape, there are 40,000 families in Russia alone, a majority of whom would emigrate to this country. Mr. Hiller will explain to you the object of his visit. These people the Mennonites are somewhat similar to our Quaker population. They do not believe in wars or fighting, are moral, sober, frugal and industrious people, and desirable as citizens of our country.

Respectfully yours
Jay Cooke.

Paul Tschetter, Lorenz Tschetter, Tobias Unruh petition the President of the United States, New York, August 8, 1873.

Source:

Ibid.

To his Excellency
The President of the United States:

Whereas, we the undersigned having lost by the new military law of Russia the privileges granted to us by the Emperor Paul, for Evermore, that we Mennonites should be exempt from military service—it being against our conscience and religious faith; and Whereas, having heard and read in many books of our brethren that exemptions from military service exist in the United States of America, we have been chosen to visit America to investigate this matter.

The result of these investigations is that, as far as understood our Mennonite brethren already settled in this country have been called upon to serve during the late civil war; although they declared it was against their conscience and religious faith, and that they could get a release only by the payment of three hundred dollars each.

We therefore fear that in leaving and selling our homesteads and lands in Russia for a low price spending almost all our money to make the long voyage to this country and to reach our destination, it might be the case that should a war break out and we should be asked to pay three hundred dollars (or any other sum of money) for exemption from liability to serve, it would have been in vain for us to emigrate and leave behind us our cherished memories; and we would be no better off than in Russia.

We the undersigned deputies therefore most respectfully beg to ask of Your Excellency to allow to us and all our brethren exemption from military service for the next fifty years, without payment of money on our part for such exemption. We also desire to be allowed to keep our German schools in our colonies, and to administer them according to our own rules as we have done in Russia.

We further beg to ask of your Excellency whether we shall be allowed *not* to serve as judges or jurymen; this being likewise contrary to our religious faith and leaving it a matter of option with us to exercise the privilege of voting, or not as the case may be, at Elections—after we have been duly naturalized as American citizens.

When we shall be able to show a written grant of these privileges on returning to our brethren in Russia, an immense emigration from that country will take place; while in the contrary case only a comparatively small number will leave—the greater portion being unwilling to emigrate on uncertain hopes and run the risk of arriving here as poor men without having bettered their condition in any way.

We most respectfully ask your Excellency's consideration of this our petition, and as early a response in writing as the case will admit of meanwhile subscribing ourselves

Your obedient servants,
Paul Tschetter
Lorenz Tschetter.
Tobias Unruh.

(A pencil note on this petition gives a translation of the signatures from German to Latin script and this note is added: "Please have the answer directed to Messrs. Jay Cooke and Co. for M. L. Hiller, New York.")

President Grant's endorsement, dated August 9, 1873, *on the petition of August* 8, 1873.

Source:

Ibid.

Respectfully referred to the Secretary of State. Of course no privileges can be accorded to foreign born citizens not accorded to all other citizens. But it may be proper to state to these people that it is entirely improbable that they will ever be called upon to perform involuntary Military Service.

(Sgd.) U. S. Grant.

Memorandum; Executive Mansion. Delegation of Mennonites, Petition for Exemption from Military Service for the next fifty years, should they immigrate to America. Respectfully referred to the Secretary of State, whose attention is invited by the endorsement of the President. By direction of the President. August 12, 1873. (Signed by Secretary to President)

Telegram from Jay Cooke to Hamilton Fish, August 13, 1873.

Source:

Ibid.

The Mennonites are anxiously awaiting answer to their petition delivered to the President at Long Branch. They leave tomorrow. Please direct answer to us—Jay Cooke and Co.

Telegram from Hamilton Fish to Jay Cooke, August 13, 1873.

Source:

U. S. Dept. of State, Domestic Letters, Vol. 99, page 545.

An answer cannot be sent by tomorrow. I must hear further from the President before answering. I have written to him.

Hamilton Fish

M. L. Hiller to Hamilton Fish, August 29, 1873.

Source:

U. S. Dept. of State, Miscellaneous Letters, August, 1873, Part II.

Dear Sir

About three weeks ago, I had the honor to introduce to the President of the U. S. the Mennonite Delegation from Russia.

We left with him a petition inquiring about the rights of non-combatant Christians in case of War and also, about other questions relating to their duties in this country.

The Delegation referred to represents a very large community and they are earnestly desirous of obtaining from the Department information on the question involved, at the earliest possible moment.

Please send the answer to M. L. Hiller in care of Messrs Jay Cooke and Co in New York who represents the Mennonite Delegation by power of attorney

Respectfully
Yours obedt Servant
M. L. Hiller

Hamilton Fish to M. L. Hiller, September 5, 1873.

Source:

U. S. Dept. of State, Domestic Letters, Vol. 100, Page 114.

Dear Sir: I have to acknowledge your letter of 29th August forwarded from Washington.

The President had sent me the letter of the Mennonite Delegation. The reason why it has not been formally answered is that it was represented that they were to leave the United States within a very short time after the receipt of their letter and that as the only reply which could be officially given to this application would necessarily have been to the effect

that the President can give them no assurance such as they asked. I addressed the President on the subject. They wish to be guaranteed against the obligation to perform military duty and to serve as Judges or as Jurors, and that they shall not be called upon to pay any commutation for exemption from military service and that they shall control their own schools, etc.

The ordinary military duty (militia service) jury duty and control of public schools are exclusively subjects of State legislation and the President could hold out no assurance to them that they should be excepted from such requirements as the states within which they may settle shall impose upon their other citizens.

So too with regard to their wish to be exempt from the payment of commutation for military service;—they refer to the fact that during our late civil war some of their people (as was the case with other non-combatants) were required to pay commutation (to provide substitutes) and they wish a guarantee that for fifty years they are exempt therefrom—of course the President can give no such guarantee.—It is true that we hope not to be involved in a war during the next fifty years which may make necessary a call for such service—but should the occasion arise there is little doubt that Congress will find itself unable to except any particular class of citizens on account of their religious creed or scruples from the requirements which it may find necessary to place upon other citizens.

It was impossible therefore to give the answer which they and you desired and as that could not be done before they were to sail I have delayed making any reply until I shall have had an opportunity to consult with the President.

With much respect your obedient servant,
Hamilton Fish.

These documents clarify the relations which existed between the Mennonite delegates, the Chief Executive and the Secretary of State respectively.

Additional research made in the records of the Public Land Office of the Department of the Interior revealed other documents incomplete, however, concerning the desire of the Mennonites to occupy a portion of the public land in a compact body. The negotiations to this end, in which Cornelius Janzen was prominent and in which certain members of Congress participated are reflected in the following excerpt from the 1873 report of Columbus Delano, Secretary of the Interior.

Source:

House Executive Document I, Part 5, 43:1, pp. XII-XIII.

"I desire to invite the attention of Congress to a request from a colony of Mennonites, now and for several generations residing in Southern Russia, near the shores of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, for a modification of the existing land laws in certain particulars, to enable them to settle upon our public domain in a compact colony.

By a decree of the Russian Government, this people, numbering between forty thousand and fifty thousand persons, have been deprived of

certain immunities which they have enjoyed ever since their first settlement in Russia, and the granting of which had originally induced them to leave their former homes in Prussia and settle in the present place of abode.

It is their desire to come to the United States and to occupy a portion of our public lands in a compact body, with no strangers to their religious faith within the exterior bounds of their possessions. Such exclusive occupancy they deem essential to enable them to carry out their peculiar system of farming, which to some extent involves a community of interest in and occupancy of the lands; and they also wish to avoid, as far as possible, the presence of any disturbing elements in their immediate neighborhood.

The deprivation of the immunities heretofore enjoyed by them does not take effect until the expiration of ten years from June, 1871, the date of the imperial decree. Within that time it is their desire to dispose of their property in Russia, and remove to a country where they may enjoy civil and religious liberty; and they have selected the United States as a place where they can most fully realize such freedom.

In order, however, to enable them to obtain possession of lands in a compact body, some concessions must necessarily be made from the present requirements of the land laws. I would respectfully suggest that the Secretary of the Interior be authorized to withdraw from sale or entry such lands as they may desire to occupy, for a term of years long enough to enable them to emigrate to this country and settle thereon, and to dispose of such lands to those persons among the emigrants who shall make the proper entry or purchase thereof in accordance with existing laws. Should they desire to settle within railroad limits, the authority should enable the withdrawal, in like manner, of the alternate sections belonging to the Government. It is possible that the entire body of emigrants may not desire to locate in one colony, but would prefer the selection of two or more colonies or locations. It would be well, therefore, to confer such discretion on the Secretary of the Interior as would enable him to meet their views in that regard. The entire area they will probably require will be about 500,000 acres."

President Grant in his Annual Message to Congress of December 1, 1873, made favorable mention of the Mennonites and invited attention to the above report as is seen in the following excerpt.

Source:

Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* 1908, Vol. VII, p. 253.

"The expressed desire of the representatives of a large colony of citizens of Russia to emigrate to this country, as is understood, with the consent of their Government, if certain concessions can be made to enable them to settle in a compact colony, is of great interest, as going to show the light in which our institutions are regarded by an industrious, intelligent, and wealthy people, desirous of enjoying civil and religious liberty; and the acquisition of so large an immigration of citizens of a superior class would without doubt be of substantial benefit to the country. I invite attention to the suggestion of the Secretary of the Interior in this behalf."

Shortly thereafter petitions were presented to Congress (Congressional Record 43:1, 1873-74, II, Part I, p. 100, Dec. 8, 1873; p. 570, Jan. 12, 1874.) and during the next few months attempts were made to pass a law providing for the acquisition of government land and for the settlement of independent Mennonite colonies. These attempts energetic though they were did not lead to legislation. As the debates continued the Mennonite emigration from Russia and Prussia made considerable progress but the desire to settle in colonies had become less vigorous. The keen competition between the land departments of the various railroad companies resulted in rapid contractual arrangements with the Mennonite pioneers. As a result the original plans for compact settlements were more or less abandoned. Early observations in that respect can be found in the *St. Paul (Minn.) Press,* in *The New York Times* and in other newspapers, although such information is not always reliable.

Reference is made in the Mennonite Memorial to Congress of January 12, 1874 (No. 4 in the above list of sources) to the "sentiment expressed by President Grant, in his message of March 3, 1873" which they considered a source of "great encouragement." However no record has been found of a message of that date. Possibly a sentiment expressed in the Second Inaugural Address of March 4, 1873, was that source. Prof. Young although unaware of the Memorial made reference to the sentiment in the Inaugural Address (*The American Historical Review* referred to above, and in her larger study, "The Mennonites in South Dakota," *South Dakota Historical Collections*, Pierre, 1920, Vol. X, p. 482). She quoted from it, this rhetorical hope of the President: "... I believe that our great Maker is preparing the world, in His own good time, to become one nation, speaking one language, and when armies and navies will be no longer required." Obviously there is no assurance personal to the Mennonites in this. Much more reassuring to them must have been the direct reference made by President Grant in his Annual Message to Congress of December 1, 1873 quoted above. The obscurity in the Memorial as to the source of the encouragement could easily be dispelled by assuming that "March 3" should have read "December 3," the date on which the President's Annual Message appeared in the newspapers.

"Encouragement" to these Mennonites from Russia and Prussia meant, in the final analysis, exemption from military service such as the Canadian government had granted. The President of the United States was unable to grant such exemption. Occasional references were made in congressional debates to their non-combatant

attitude but there was no national recognition of the status of the conscientious objector. However the states competing for settlers freely granted legalized freedom from militia service to members of religious societies whose creed or discipline forbade the bearing of arms.